

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2192

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5995

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, KS, US

SUBJECT: US-ROK POLICY PLANNING TALKS

SUMMARY: AFTER MANY MONTHS OF EMBASSY URGINGS, FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS FINALLY INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN US-ROK POLICY PLANNING TALKS. END SUMMARY.

1. VICE MINISTER RHIE MUN YONG CALLED CHARGE TO HIS OFFICE MORNING OF JULY 11 TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITY OF INITIATING US-ROK POLICY PLANNING TALKS ALONG THE LINES OF THE US-JAPAN MEETINGS. RHIE SAID THAT ROK EMBASSY WASHINGTON RAISED THIS POSSIBILITY WITH DEPARTMENT ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO. AT THAT TIME, DEPARTMENT INDICATED INTEREST, BUT ONLY IF THE TALKS WERE HELD EXCLUSIVELY IN WASHINGTON. THIS WAS NOT A SATISFACTORY PROPOSAL FOR ROK AND THEREFORE, IDEA WAS DROPPED.

2. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, THIS EMBASSY RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF POLICY PLANNING DISCUSSIONS WITH MOFA IN AN EFFORT TO DRAW ROKG'S ATTENTION TO LONGER-RANGE PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS. AS WE INDICATED IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THESE KINDS OF DISCUSSIONS WERE JUST NOT AVAILABLE DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, SINCE US-ROK RELATIONS WERE CONTINUALLY BURDENED BY SHORT-RANGE CRISIS. WE ANTICI-
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PATED, HOWEVER, THAT STARTING IN 1978 THOSE RELATIONSHIPS MIGHT ENSUE IN CALMER ATMOSPHERE AND THAT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSIONS OF LONGER-RANGE PROBLEMS MIGHT BECOME AVAILABLE IN THE 78-79 TIMEFRAME. OUR INQUIRIES DID NOT ELICIT A VERY POSITIVE RESPONSE UNTIL TODAY. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE VICE MINISTER'S PRESENT ALACRITY RESULTS FROM CONVERSATION CHARGE HAD

WITH KIM KYONG WONG (SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, BLUE HOUSE) ON THIS MATTER, WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY TURNED INTO A DIRECTIVE FROM THE BLUE HOUSE TO EXPLORE FURTHER THE MATTER WITH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT IF WE ARE TO PURSUE LONGER-RANGE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE RESOLUTION OF THE PENINSULA ISSUE, WE MUST FIND WAYS OF FORCING ROKG TO DEVELOP SOME PROPOSALS OF THEIR OWN. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THEY HAVE NOT DONE SO, AS RECENTLY EVIDENCED BY PRESIDENT PARK'S ECONOMIC PROPOSAL, BUT ROKG'S SUGGESTIONS COME AT UNPLANNED MOMENTS AND DO NOT SEEM TO BE CONNECTED WITH ANY LONG-RANGE STRATEGY. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO "SELL" THE TRIPARTITE CONCEPT A YEAR AGO IF THERE HAD BEEN SOME INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM WHICH COULD HAVE PREPARED THE WAY FOR DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSAL IN AN ORGANIZED FASHION.

4. IN DISCUSSING THE IDEA WITH THE VICE MINISTER, CHARGE SUGGESTED THAT THESE POLICY TALKS COULD BE THE COUNTERPART TO THE SCM PROCEDURE, ALTHOUGH AT A LOWER LEVEL. AT THE MOMENT, ROK THINKING HAS ONLY PROCEEDED TO THE DETERMINATION THAT THE MEETINGS WOULD HAVE TO BE HELD ALTERNATIVELY IN WASHINGTON AND SEOUL AND THAT THE HEAD OF THE KOREAN DELEGATION WOULD BE EITHER THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS OR THE VICE MINISTER
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HIMSELF, DEPENDING ON THE LEVEL OF THE U.S. DELEGATION CHAIRMAN. ROK HAS GIVEN SOME THOUGHT TO INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF BLUE HOUSE, KCIA, AND PERHAPS MND ON THE TEAM, BUT IS NOWHERE NEAR REACHING A CONCLUSION ON THIS ISSUE.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE, OF COURSE, VERY PLEASED THAT ROKG HAS MOVED THIS FAR ON A PROPOSAL WHICH MIGHT BE VERY USEFUL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE COHERENT AND FAR-SIGHTED KOREAN DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY. WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S THOUGHTS ON THIS MATTER SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE THE DISCUSSIONS WITH MOFA IN THE HOPES OF HAVING A FIRST MEETING SOMETIME TOWARD THE END OF THIS YEAR.
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